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## Security Breach Involved?

### Mondale Protege On the Spot

It was not a good week for David L. Aaron, the dovish protege of Vice President Walter Mondale who was appointed to a top position on the National Security Council to offset the more hawkish Zbigniew Brzezinski.

First, Aaron refused to appear before a House Armed Services subcommittee investigating the politically motivated leak of secrets involving the Stealth aircraft. Retired Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, former chief of naval operations, has charged that two top White House officials have told him that Aaron played a key role in leaking the Stealth secrets, a move designed to counter Reagan charges that the Administration has let the nation's defenses slip dangerously.

Aaron did supply a sworn statement that he had nothing to do with the Stealth leaking. But presidential counsel Lloyd Cutler informed the subcommittee that President Carter has refused to let Aaron appear on the grounds of executive privilege.

Subcommittee Chairman Sam Stratton (D-N.Y.) was not persuaded, saying Carter could not forbid Aaron's testimony because executive privilege covered only White House advisers and their direct dealings with the chief executive. Stratton said his subcommittee would probably subpoena Aaron for public testimony when the House reconvenes. But that will be after the election—which is, of course, the way Carter wants it.

The other problem for Aaron was the spelling out of his possible role as the loose-talking official who may have compromised a top U.S. spy in the Soviet Union. Rumors of Aaron's involvement have circulated in the capital for months. Both the FBI and CIA have been quoted as saying there is no substance to the allegation.

As columnist Jack Anderson wrote last week, Aaron "may be as innocent as the White House insists he is. But my own investigation indicates otherwise."

Anderson's office talked with four intelligence sources who are not only familiar with the case but who have been scrupulously accurate in the past. They claim that Aaron let slip some ultra-secret information at a party, that an intercepted diplomatic dispatch proved he talked out of turn and that the White House is more anxious to cover up the embarrassment than to uncover the truth.

Aaron's slip allegedly exposed the identity of Anatoly N. Pilatov, a Soviet intelligence officer who worked undercover as an American agent known to the CIA by the code name "Trigon." According to Anderson, Aaron, who has access to the most supersecret "blue line" documents—several levels above those marked "top secret"—mentioned to a Soviet bloc diplomat some facts that had come from Trigon dealing with Warsaw Pact nuclear weapons.

According to Anderson, a Third World diplomat happened to overhear the conversation and reported it back to his government. The cable was intercepted by the National Security Agency, which monitors all overseas communications, and caused immediate repercussions.

"The message was such an embarrassment to the White House that, under an executive order for the protection of private individuals, it was supposed to be destroyed. Yet I understand a copy was kept and might be ferreted out if the FBI looked hard enough. Shortly thereafter, the CIA cancelled all 'blue-line' clearances. This was done, sources say, because Aaron had compromised the documents and had 'rolled up one of our agents.'"

That Trigon was "rolled up" is beyond dispute. The Soviet press has reported that he was executed as an American spy following a secret military trial in 1978. Some CIA officials believe he committed suicide to avoid further torture. His Moscow lawyer claims he is still alive, serving out a 15-year sentence.